

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DAMASC 02790 030901Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 EB-07 SSO-00 /030 W
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O R 030917Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2914
INFO USDOC WASHDC
AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY ATHENS
AMEMBASSY TUNIS

UNCLAS DAMASCUS 2790

ATHENS FOR RTDO

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: BEXP, SY
SUBJECT: EDP SEMINAR MISSION -- NOVEMBER 1977

REF: STATE 96285 (NOTAL); DAMASCUS 2725

FOLLOWING IS REQUESTED MARKET INFORMATION FOR SUBJECT MISSION:

1. CITIES TO BE VISITED/DURATION OF VISIT: DAMASCUS ONLY,
MINIMUM OF THREE WORKING DAYS.
2. TOPICS AND THEMES: AS DEPARTMENT IS AWARE FROM
DAMASCUS A-1 (1/4/77) SYRIA IS JUST BEGINNING TO ENTER THE
COMPUTER AGE: HER EXPANDING ECONOMY AND LONG-RANGE
DEVELOPMENT GOALS WILL REQUIRE A GREATER INVESTMENT IN
COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY. FOR THESE REASONS, AS WELL AS AN
ALREADY DEMONSTRATED TASTE FOR US HARDWARE, WE GAVE
"COMPUTERS AND PERIPHERAL EQUIPMENT" FIRST PRIORITY IN
OUR "BEST PROSPECTS" REPORT FOR FY79. FOR SAME REASONS,
WE THINK SEMINAR SHOULD STICK TO A
BASICALLY EDUCATIONAL THEME: DEMONSTRATING HOW A
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GREATER USE OF AMERICAN EDP TECHNOLOGY
CAN INCREASE EFFICIENCY, REDUCE COSTS, AND IMPROVE
PLANNING. RAPID ECONOMIC GROWTH SINCE 1973 HAS PUT
SEVERE STRAINS ON SYRIAN MANAGEMENT CAPACITIES; WE THINK
IT USEFUL FOR SEMINAR TO STRESS ADVANTAGES OF EDP
TECHNOLOGY AS MANAGEMENT TOOL

3. BIGGEST MARKET POTENTIAL OVER NEXT FIVE YEARS IS IN MINI-AND MICROCOMPUTERS; SEMINAR SHOULD STRESS THEIR APPLICABILITY IN DEVELOPING ECONOMY.

4. SYRIA NEITHER PRODUCES NOR EXPORTS EDP EQUIPMENT AND SERVICES. AT PRESENT, THERE ARE ABOUT FOUR MAIN-FRAME COMPUTERS INSTALLED AND OPERATING IN SYRIA: CENTRAL BUREAU OF STATISTICS (SUPPLIED BY NCR), PTT (NCR), ARMY MOBIZATION OFFICE (IRIS-FRANCE), AND MINISTRY OF DEFENSE RESEARCH CENTER (UNIDATA-FRANCE). IN ADDITION THERE ARE 5-6 SMALL, FREE-STANDING COMPUTERS (SMALLER THAN MAIN FRAME AND LARGER THAN MINICOMPUTERS), MOSTLY SUPPLIED BY METRA (FRANCE). FINNALLY, SYRIA HAS APPROXIMATELY 200 MINI- AND MICROCOMPUTERS, ABOUT HALF OF WHICH ARE NCR. LOGABAX (FRANCE) IS THE PRINCIPAL COMPETITOR IN THIS AREA, AND SINGER AND OLIVETTI HAVE SOLD A FEW UNITS.

5. IMPORT DUTIES, PRICING, TRADE/CURRENCY RESTRICTIONS. TOTAL DUTIES, INCLUDING STAMPS: ABOUT 29 PERCENT. SOME GOVERNMENT PURCHASES, ESP. MAIN FRAMES, ARE TAX EXEMPT. GOODS SUBJECT TO IMPORT LICENSE WITH 365-DAY FACILITIES (OWING OT SHORTAGE OF FOREIGN EXCHANGE). SYRIAN PAYMENT RECORD, HOWEVER, EXCELLENT.

6. MAJOR COMPETITION: FRENCH

7. CONFLICTING PROMOTION EVENTS: NONE, BUT SEMINAR SHOULD NOTE THE AL-ADHA HOLIDAY NOVEMBER 20-24, DURING WHICH ALL GOVERNMENT OFFICES, MOST BUSINESSES CLOSE.
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ALMOST ALL NOVEMBER IS HAJ SEASON, WHICH STRAINS HOTEL AND TRASPORTATION FACILITIES.

8. A UNITED NATIONS AGENCY RECENTLY GAVE A 200,000 DOLS LOAN TO THE CENTRAL BUREAU OF STATISTICS TOWARDS BUYING NEW COMPUTER (NOT YET CHOSEN). EDP EQUIPMENT COULD BE ELIGIBLE FOR SYRIAN PURCHASE UNDER AN ANTICIPATED FY 77 USAID COMMODITY IMPORT LOAN TO SYRIA (FY75 AND 77 COMMODITY IMPORT LOANS TO SYRIA TOTALED 45M DOLS.)

9. NO NEW SPECIFIC MAJOR PROJECT CALLS FOR GREATLY INCREASED USE OF EDP, BUT EDP HAS WIDE, ACROSS-THE-BOARD APPLICATION THROUGHOUT DEVELOPING SYRIAN ECONOMY. AMONG OTHER POTENTIAL END-USERS, WE WOULD TARGET BANKS AND SYRIAN ARAB AIRLINES (SOON TO FLY TRANSATLANTIC ROUTE).

10. NCR HAS HAD FOR 27 YEARS AN OFFICE IN DAMASCUS AND IS TODAY THE ONLY US FIRM WITH A SYRIAN BRANCH (1976 SALES: 1.7M DOLS; PROJECTED 1977 SALES:

2.5M DOLS). INTERDATA, IBM, AND WANG ARE REPRESENTED BY
LOCAL AGENTS.
MURPHY

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